

GUIDE ^A _{TO THE} HERPS
(REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS)
OF THE
SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS
NATIONAL RECREATION AREA



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Introduction

Herpetology is the branch of zoology concerned with the study of amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders, newts) and reptiles (lizards, snakes, turtles, tortoises, crocodiles). “Herp” is a vernacular term for amphibians and reptiles.

Herpetology offers benefits to humanity in the study of the role of amphibians and reptiles in global ecology, especially because amphibians are often very sensitive to environmental changes, offering a visible warning to humans that significant changes are taking place. Some toxins and venoms produced by reptiles and amphibians are useful in human medicine. These inherently beautiful creatures will continue to fascinate people so long as we continue to protect them.

In the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, National Park Service researchers conduct multiple studies to monitor the distribution and abundance of herps (in addition to much other wildlife). In fact, herps are often the most abundant vertebrates in a given region. By studying these animals, we can better manage our natural resources and further our knowledge of wildlife ecology, biology, genetics, behavior, as well as the effects of urban development and other anthropologic activities.

This guide includes information on 35 known species of herps in the Santa Monica Mountains NRA. Within each taxonomic group (lizards, turtles, amphibians, snakes) the animals are listed from most to least common, generally. This guide was designed to be interesting to read, easy to understand, and helpful in assisting anyone (even the most inexperienced) to identify herps in the region. Hopefully, with recognition of the individual species, this guide will help bring acknowledgement and appreciation to these animals. If nothing else, it is fun to look at the pictures. Enjoy.

Acknowledgements

This guide was made by Mark Ziman, a wildlife biology intern for the National Park Service of the Santa Monica Mountains NRA. During his time in the Santa Monica Mountains, Mark frequently worked hands on with the wild animals in the area. He created this comprehensive guide so the public would have access to scientifically accurate information about *all* the herps in the Santa Monica Mountains. Mark wrote some of the text and took about a quarter of the pictures.

Special thanks to Dr. Robert Fisher of the U.S. Geological Survey. He provided the detailed, thorough information in the text. Dr. Fisher is an accomplished herpetologist and has years of experience with herps in Southern California.

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Great Basin Fence Lizard

Sceloporus occidentalis (subspecies: *longipes*)

Size (snout to vent length): 2.0-3.5 in (5.0-8.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characters: Dorsal scales keeled and pointed; dark brown or black blotched pattern; small blue spots on back and large one on throat; **blue ventral patches**, with a black mid-ventral stripe separating the patches; yellow or orange on rear under surfaces of limbs.

Juveniles: Lacks blue on throat; blue ventral patches faint or absent.

Dimorphism: Swollen tail base in males with **paired enlarged scales just posterior of vent**, and femoral pores; female has less vivid markings and lacks, or has smaller, pale blue ventral patches (see photos below).

Notes: Regularly, although unscientifically, referred to as **Blue Bellies**. By far the most common lizard in the region. Seen in all habitats, often “doing push-ups” on rocks or sunning themselves on rocks. Have large variation in colors.



Underside of Male



Underside of Female

Western Skink

Plestiodon skiltonianus

Size (snout to vent length): 1.5-3.0 in (4.5-7.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characters: Broad, brown stripe down middle of the back edge with black; pale whitish or golden stripes down sides, separated by a beige stripe beginning behind eyes; ventral side whitish or grey; smooth scales; small legs; stripes appear faded in older adults.

Juveniles: Stripes are more contrasting; a **bright cobalt blue tail**.

Notes: Although common in area, sightings are uncommon. They often stay covered and are fast moving through dense vegetation. They are a small, delicate species. They have smooth scales and tails that are easily lost.



Juvenile with bright blue tail.

Western Side-Blotched Lizard

Uta stansburiana (subspecies: *elegans*)

Size (snout to vent length): 1.5-2.5 in (3.5-6.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characters: A small species; a **conspicuous bluish-black blotch on each side behind the forelimbs**; dorsum blotched or spotted with blue, orange, yellow, brown and/or black; whitish to grey on venter; orange or light blue patch on throat, and no blue belly patches.

Juveniles: Similar to adult female in pattern; may lack blue-black spots on sides.

Dimorphism: Male has swollen tail base, blue and yellow flecks on mid-dorsal side, and enlarged postanal scales; female lacks blue and yellow mid-dorsal flecks and is blotched dorsally in brown and black.

Notes: A common species throughout area, prefers open habitats with rock or sand.



Blotch on side.

Southern Alligator Lizard

Elgaria multicarinata (supspecies: *multicarinata*, *webbii*, and intergrades)

Size (snout to vent length): 3.0-7.0 in (8.0-18.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characters: A long-bodied species **with black and white crossbars on back and tail**; brown, yellow, grey or reddish ground color; **prominent fold along sides of body**; dorsal scales strongly keeled; black or dusky bars on sides; yellow eyes; tail over twice the body length (if not regenerated); large head with pointed snout; small legs; broad, forked tongue.

Juveniles: Broad dorsal stripe of yellow, tan or reddish-gold; indistinct crossbands.

Dimorphism: Head broader and more triangular in adult males. **Males may exude hemipenis when stressed.**

Notes: May look snake-like at first glance. Individuals **will attempt to bite** and defecate when handled; though **not dangerous**.



A male's *triangular* head.

Coastal Whiptail

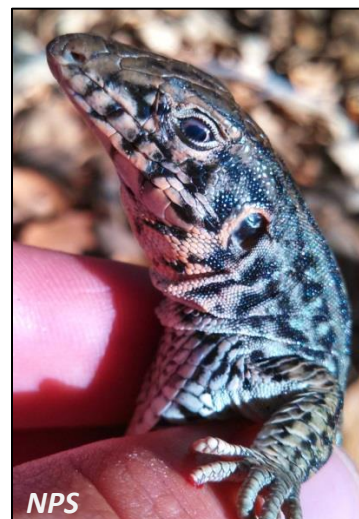
Aspidoscelis tigris (subspecies: *stejnegeri*; and possible intergrades with subspecies *munda*)

Size (snout to vent length): 2.5-5.0 in (6.0-11.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characters: Eight light-colored stripes that are often very indistinct, with crossbars in adults suggesting checkered appearance; dark markings on dorsum with yellow, tan, or brown background; throat pale with black spots; long tail; enlarged, square scales on venter; dorsal scales fine and granular; tongue is forked and flicked continually.

Juveniles: Similar to adults, with distal portion of tail bright blue-green.

Notes: A distinctive species with a jerking gait, rarely sits still. Adults are surprisingly strong and have very sharp claws.



Blainville's Horned Lizard (formerly: Coast Horned Lizard)

Phrynosoma blainvillii

Size (snout to vent length): 2.5-4.5 in (6.0-11.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characters: A distinctive flat-bodied species; two horns at back of head longer than surrounding spines; two rows of fringed scales down sides; two rows of enlarged pointed scales on margin of lower jaw; yellowish, brown or grey dorsum with contrasting wavy blotches of darker color; pointed scales on dorsum of body; beige or yellow venter with black spotting.

Dimorphism: Male has broader tail at base, enlarged postanal scales, and femoral pores; adult females are larger than adult males.

Notes: Although **rare** (and very well camouflaged), certainly one of the most intriguing species in the Santa Monicas. Individuals have been featured on nature shows for their ability to eject blood from their eye sockets when threatened. Negatively affected by urban development.



California Legless Lizard

Anniella pulchra

Size (snout to vent length): 3.0-5.5 in (8.0-14.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: Legless; silver or beige on dorsal side; greenish yellow venter; smooth shiny scales; black mid-dorsal line running length of body; additional lines where ventral and dorsal colors meet; distinct glossy black tip on tail, if not regenerated.

Juveniles: Cream or silver on dorsal half; grey or pale yellow on ventral half, but very similar to adults.

Notes: Yes, a legless lizard, not a snake—the only species of legless lizard in California. A burrowing species **seldom seen** unless uncovered. Prefers loose soils associated with drainages and valley bottoms but also occurs on hillsides. Can be nocturnal during summer, but rarely on roads at night.



Slider / Red-eared Slider

Trachemys scripta

Size: 6.0-12.0 in (15-30 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: Carapace has yellow streaking on olive or black shields; **bright red, orange or yellow spot behind eyes**; head and limbs are dark and striped with yellow; jagged rear edge of carapace.

Juveniles: Green coloration of carapace much brighter as juvenile.

Dimorphism: Male is usually darker and has longer nails on front feet than female.

Notes: **Non-native** species, but becoming increasingly more common in urban areas. An aquatic turtle, although found sometimes moving overland to lay eggs or leaving a drying pond.



Note conspicuous red spot on head's side.

Pacific Pond Turtle (formerly Western Pond Turtle)

Actinemys marmorata

Size: 5.0 -7.0 in (12.0-18.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: Low carapace with shields that have a network of lines or dashes of brown or black on an olive or dark background coming from its growth centers. Limbs and head olive, yellow, orange, or brown often with darker lines, flecks or spots.

Juveniles: Tail as long as shell; head, limbs and tail marked with yellow; shields of the carapace have striking pattern of radiating lines.

Dimorphism: Male has a lighter throat; tail is much longer than that of female with cloaca extending past end of shell, whereas cloaca of female does not extend past end of shell; shell usually flatter and less marked than a female's, with underside concave.

Notes: Only **native** turtle to the Santa Monica Mountains. It's an aquatic turtle that utilizes upland habitat seasonally. They occur in ponds, streams, lakes, ditches, and marshes.



Black-bellied Slender Salamander

Batrachoseps nigriventris

Size (snout to vent length): 1.5-2.5 in (3.5-6.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A very small, worm-like species with a long, slender body and tail; small head and limbs; highly variable coloration of brownish, light tan, pinkish, or greyish dorsum with faint speckling on venter.

Notes: A very small species. Most commonly found among leaf litter, near logs or under bushes where it can keep moist (skin needs moisture for respiration). *Fragile and easy to injure, will release tail easily.*



California Newt

Taricha torosa

Size (snout to vent length): 2.5-3.5 in (7.0-9.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A distinctive species with light-colored lower eyelids; reddish brown dorsum; reddish-orange or yellow venter; large eyes and rough skin; tail flattened laterally.

Dimorphism: Breeding males have flattened tail; dark skin on undersides of feet.

Notes: Populations occur at only some of the Santa Monica Mountains' streams. They are an indicator of a healthy stream environment. Seen along creeks and streams close to water, especially in rocky areas. They are docile, but have toxic skin secretions; **do not handle!**



Monterey Salamander / *Ensatina*

Ensatina escholtzii (subspecies *escholtzii*)

Size (snout to vent length): 2.0-3.0 in (5.5-7.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A moderate-sized species; reddish brown dorsum with lighter venter; large, black eyes; smooth skin; ***swollen tail with a conspicuous constricted base.***

Juveniles: Bright orange on dorsum, but generally similar to adults.

Dimorphism: Male has enlarged upper lip; slimmer, longer tail that has a more pronounced constriction at the base.

Notes: **Uncommonly seen**, but occurs in a variety of habitats especially within and chaparral within the Santa Monicas. Most active during and after rains. May exude milky tail secretion that is toxic.



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Arboreal Salamander

Aneides lugubris

Size (snout to vent length): 2.0-3.0 in (5.5-8.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A large species with plain purplish-brown coloring usually spotted dorsally with gold or yellow, although may be unspotted; **large triangular shaped head; large squared off toes.**

Juveniles: Dark overall; clouded with greyish color and fine yellow speckling on back; rust markings on snout, along tail and on sides above forelimbs.

Dimorphism: Male has a broad triangular shaped head, with the front teeth of the jaw extend beyond the bottom lip.

Notes: This species is an excellent climber and **rare** to find. Large adults can inflict a painful bite. Primarily associated with oak and sycamore woodlands and thick chaparral.



Pacific Treefrog

Pseudacris regilla

Size: 1.0-2.0 in (2.5-5.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A small species with a prominent dark brown or black (regal) eyestripe; variable dorsal coloration of shades of green, tan, reddish, grey, brown or black; dark triangular blotch on head; variable dark blotches or spotting depending on color phase, which can change dramatically from dark to light in a short time; venter whitish or cream with yellow on undersides of legs and lower abdomen; toe webbing reduced; small toe pads; smooth skin

Dimorphism: Male has yellow throat.

Additional Notes: The most common frog in the region. Can occur distant from surface water in a variety of habitats. This treefrog has been found in all habitat types in the Santa Monicas.



California Treefrog

Psuedacris cadaverina

Size: 1.0-2.0 in (3.0-5.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A cryptically colored species, **often resembling granitic stones; grey or light brown on dorsum with darker blotches**; whitish venter; yellow on undersides of legs, groin and lower abdomen; conspicuous toe webbing and pads; dorsal skin roughened-warty. **Lacks the dark eyestripe found on *P. regilla*.**

Dimorphism: Male has dusky-yellow throat.

Additional Notes: A species most likely to occur along streams with abundant boulders and cobbles in channel. Distribution spotty and localized. Often confused with Pacific Treefrog.



California Toad (formerly Western Toad)

Anaxyrus boreas (subspecies: *halophilus*)

Size: 2.0-5.0- in (5.5-13.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A large toad species; **white or cream dorsal stripe**; dusky gray or greenish dorsally with skin glands concentrated within the dark blotches; parotoid glands are oval, widely separated, and larger than upper eyelids; mottled venter; horizontal pupils; lacks cranial crests.

Juveniles: Dorsal stripe may be weak or absent; large young have prominent dorsal and ventral spotting and yellow feet.

Dimorphism: Male has smoother skin; reduced dorsal blotching; nuptial pads (thickened skin) on forefeet during breeding season; throat pale as in female.

Notes: A **common species** occupying a wide variety of habitats; frequently encountered during wet season on roads or near water at other times. When struggling, adults will often vocalize (sounds like a peeping chick).



Western Spadefoot Toad

Spea hammondi

Size: 1.5-3.0 in (4.0-7.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A relatively smooth-skinned species; eye is pale gold with vertical pupil; green or grey dorsum often with skin tubercles tipped in orange; whitish color on venter; wedge-shaped black spade on each hind foot.

Juveniles: Similar to adults, but spotting more distinct.

Additional Notes: Populations are localized, but widespread. Prefers grassland, scrub and chaparral locally but could occur in oak woodlands. Nocturnal. Activity limited to wet season, summer storms, or during evening with elevated substrate moisture levels. Skin secretions smell like peanut butter and may cause sneezing.



Bullfrog

Lithobates catesbeiana

Size: 5.0-8.0 in (13.0-21.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: Largest frog in California; prominent sacral humps; olive, green or brownish dorsum with vague spots or blotches; lighter green head; whitish, grey-mottled venter; legs blotched or banded; conspicuous eardrums; lacks dorsolateral folds.

Juveniles: Similar to adults, but more spotting and more grey on the dorsum.

Dimorphism: Male has yellow throat; eardrum larger than eye; swollen thumb base.

Additional Notes: **Non-native**, an introduced species; wary and difficult to capture. Male produces distinctive, deep-pitched vocalizations. Individuals will squawk when jumping into the water to escape. Usually found in association with permanent water, but can disperse over land at least several kilometers. These species require permanent water as their tadpoles over-winter. **Huge** tadpoles.



California Red-Legged Frog

Rana draytonii

Size: 1.5-5.5 in (4.0-14.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A moderate to large species with dorsolateral folds; red lower abdomen and underside of hindlegs; brown, grey, olive or reddish color on dorsum with black flecks and dark, irregular, light-centered blotches; dark mask with whitish border above upper jaw; black and red or yellow mottling in groin; roughened skin on dorsum.

Juveniles: More pronounced dorsal spotting; may have yellow instead of red markings on underside of legs.

Dimorphism: Male has enlarged forelimbs, thumbs, and webbing.

Additional Notes: Uncommon and rare within study area. **Federally threatened; report sightings immediately to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.**



African Clawed Frog

Xenopus laevis

Size: 2.0-6.0 in (5.0-12.5 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A highly aquatic species; smooth skin; forefeet unwebbed, hindfeet fully webbed with sharp black claws on inner toes; small head with blunt snout; eyes small, lidless and turned upward; olive to brown on dorsum with darker spots, blotches or mottling; whitish on venter; head and body flattened.

Dimorphism: Female is larger and has cloacal flaps.

Additional Notes: **Non-native**, introduced to the U.S. in the 1960s and feeds on native amphibian tadpoles. Will move overland at night during rains, and may show up in very unlikely places including golf course ponds, streams, ditches and lakes. Very slippery.



Southern Pacific Rattlesnake

Crotalus oreganus (subspecies: *helleri*)

Size: 22.0-40.0 in (55.0-102.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A rattlesnake with grey, olive, or brown ground color and light edged, darker **diamond on dorsum**; blotches on sides dark, angular and also light edged; light **stripe from corner of mouth to eye**; low-contrast dark tail rings, with terminal ring poorly defined and twice as wide; venter light yellow or cream with faint blotching; high elevation populations can be very dark or black dorsally, with little or no pattern definition; **rattle**.

Juveniles: Similar to adults, but with bright yellow-green tail; just as venomous but won't rattle.

Additional Notes: **VENOMOUS; use extreme caution.** This is the only species of rattlesnake in the Santa Monica Mountains. It is a nervous species that will aggressively defend itself when annoyed. Can strike out over length of body. It may not provide rattling alarm sound when threatened.



San Diego Gopher Snake

Pituophis catenifer (subspecies: *annectens*)

Size: 31.5-55.5 in (80.0-141.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A large species; yellow or cream dorsum becoming orange-tinted toward tail; black or brown dorsal blotches on body; widely spaced on tail; smaller blotches on sides; venter yellow or yellow-orange, pinkish toward tail; faint mottling on venter especially tail; **dark line across head between orbit of eyes**; orange or brick colored eyes with round pupils; dorsal scales keeled; vertical line down from eye; sometimes a checkerboard pattern.

Additional Notes: A large species that may hiss loudly, flatten head, vibrate tail and strike when annoyed, appearing as a viper. Widespread in most habitat types. This species is an opportunist and generalist; it can be found active any month of the year and any time of day or night. Can be confused with a rattlesnake, but this species is not dangerous.



Note conspicuous “tear drop” under eye.



California Kingsnake

Lampropeltis getula (subspecies: *californiae*)

Size: 20.0-44.0 in (50.5-111.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A polymorphic species with various color and pattern phases consisting primarily of alternating bands of black or brown, and white or yellow (banded phase) or longitudinal stripes of these same colors (striped phase); some individuals exhibit partial patterns of both and can appear marbled, spotted, or blotched; scales smooth and glossy; snout light colored; single anal scale.

Additional Notes: Individuals may excrete musk and vibrate tail. Widespread in many habitats. Generally, longitudinal striped phase not found in the Santa Monicas.



Common, banded phase.



Rare, striped phase.

San Bernardino Ringneck Snake (formerly Western Ringneck Snake)

Diadophis punctatus (subspecies: *modestus*)

Size: 10.5-16.0 in (26.0-41.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A small, slender species with an olive, brownish, blue-grey or green dorsum and a conspicuous **yellow or orange neck band**; venter yellow-orange, becoming coral toward tail with conspicuous black spots often forming rows; dark head.

Juveniles: Similar to adults, but with darker dorsal coloration.

Dimorphism: Male has tubercles on scales above vent.

Additional Notes: A gentle species. **Often coils tail into corkscrew shape displaying brilliant coral undersurface.** Small and delicate.



Two-Striped Garter Snake

Thamnophis hammondi

Size: 15.5-28.5 in (39.0-72.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A species that lacks a mid-dorsal stripe; olive, brown or brownish-grey dorsum; dull yellow, orange, or salmon venter; lengthwise rows of small, dark spots; yellow stripes on sides; throat pale; eyes brick color with round pupils; red tongue; dorsal scales keeled; usually black patches on neck behind head; occasional melanistic individuals lacking side stripes.

Dimorphism: Female has extremely constricted tail immediately posterior of the base.

Additional Notes: This species excretes foul smelling musk.



Red Coachwhip or Red Racer

Coluber flagellum (subspecies: *piceus*)

Size: 24.5-54.5 in (62.0-138.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A species with highly variable dorsal coloration; tan, grey, red, or pink with bold black or brown crossbars or blotches on neck which may blend together; venter pink; slender body and tail; large eyes with round pupils; often described as red snake with black head.

Juveniles: Black, brown, or tan transverse bands on lighter background; black neck markings absent in hatchlings and faint in juveniles less than 24 in (61 cm) in length.

Additional Notes: A fast moving diurnal snake. This species excretes foul smelling musk.



California Striped Racer / California Whipsnake / Striped Racer

Coluber lateralis (subspecies: *lateralis*)

Size: 22.5-49.0 in (57.0-125.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A slender species; black, or brownish on dorsum; lighter color toward tail; **yellow or white dark-edged stripe down sides** from black of head to vent; white, cream or pale yellow venter becoming salmon/pink at tail; large eyes with round pupils; smooth scales.

Additional Notes: An alert, fast moving, diurnal snake. This species excretes foul smelling musk.



California Black-Headed Snake

Tantilla planiceps

Size: 6.5-11.5 in (16.0-29.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A small, slender species; light brown, tan to olive-grey dorsum; narrow cream or white neck band; flattened black head; orange or coral-red venter edged with white.

Additional Notes: A small, secretive species that is seldom seen.



Western Yellow-Bellied Racer

Coluber constrictor (subspecies: *mormon*)

Size: 14.0-29.5 in (36.0-75.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A slender snake with large eyes and round pupils; smooth scales and brown, olive or bluish on dorsum; white or pale yellow venter; tail long and slender.

Juveniles: Lighter background with brown crossbars or conjoined blotches across back; smaller blotches on sides.

Additional Notes: A fast moving species. Excretes musk. Prefers grasslands and riparian habitats.



San Diego Mountain Kingsnake

Lampropeltis zonata (subspecies: *pulchra*)

Size: 20.0-40.0 in (51.0-102.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A colorful species with black, white, and red crossbands encircling body and tail; smooth, glistening scales; snout and eyes generally black; southern populations often with red spotting on top of head; usually 37 or fewer sets of bands (triads), and most red bands connect across the dorsum.

Additional Notes: A montane species that can occur at lower elevations along wooded drainages in mountains. A truly beautiful snake, but it is somewhat uncommon.



Southwestern Threadsnake (formerly Western Blind Snake)

Rena humilis (subspecies: *humilis*)

Size: 7.0-13.0 in (18.0-33.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A thin cylindrical species with no neck constriction; blunt head and tail; purplish, brown or pink dorsum with silvery sheen; light venter; no enlarged ventral scutes; eyes vestigial, appearing as dark spots beneath head scales; spine-like terminal scale on tail tip; looks like a worm.

Additional Notes: Excretes watery fluid that has a musky odor.



Coast Patch-Nosed Snake

Salvadora hexalepis (subspecies: *virgultea*)

Size: 22.0-34.0 in (56.0-87.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A slender species; yellow or beige **mid-dorsal stripe** bordered by tan or brown side stripes; dull white venter, becoming orangish toward tail; **rostral (snout) scale large, thick and triangular** in shape; large, dark eyes with round pupils; smooth scales; divided anal scale.

Dimorphism: Male has keeled scales above vent and at base of tail.

Additional Notes: An alert fast-moving diurnal species.



San Diego Nightsnake

Hypsiglena orchrorhyncha (subspecies: *klauberi*)

Size: 10.0-14.0 in (25.0-35.0 cm)

Distinguishable Characteristics: A small, pale grey, beige or light brown species; brown paired blotches on dorsum; **usually three large black blotches on the neck**, sometimes merging; venter whitish or yellow; flat head; vertical pupils; brown bar behind eyes; white labial scales; scales smooth, often with iridescence.

Additional Notes: May flatten head, coil tightly, and vibrate tail when disturbed appearing as a viper.



California Lyre Snake

Trimorphodon lyrophanes

Size: 17.5-35.5 in (45.0-90.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: A slender species with a laterally flattened body; broad head, slender neck; **V-shaped marking on top of head resembling lyre**; light brown or grey on dorsal side with brown blotches; blotches roughly hexagonal and bisected with pale crossbar; cream or white venter with pale brown spots; smooth scales; large, protruding eyes with **vertical pupils**.

Juveniles: Similar to adults in pattern, but highly contrasting in dorsal color; hatchlings can appear nearly black and white.

Dimorphism: Female is larger than male with extremely constricted tail; male's tail thickened midway between anal scale and tip, and is longer than that of a female's.

Additional Notes: A nervous species that hisses and vibrates rattleless tail when annoyed. Nocturnal and secretive, usually associated with rocky hillsides and outcrops.



California Glossy Snake

Arizona elegans (subspecies: *occidentalis*)

Size: 25.0-39.0 in (64.0-99.0 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics: Smooth, glossy scales; chocolate colored body blotches on a tan or light brown ground color; prominent eye stripe; eyes with slightly vertical pupils; countersunk lower jaw; single anal scale.

Juveniles: Similar to adults, but blotches darker.

Additional Notes: An uncommon species in Santa Monica Mountains. Primarily nocturnal, it is associated with loose soils in valleys and washes suitable for burrowing. This appears to be a species currently in great decline.

